

SRIMADBHAGAVADGITA

**Summary on
Eighth Chapter
by
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SUMMARY (EIGHTH CHAPTER)

- Note: 1. Portions in brackets are supplied ideas.
2. Numbers in brackets indicate the verses.

[Lord *Kṛṣṇa* concluded the seventh chapter by glorifying *jñāni-bhakta* as one who knows *Brahman*, *adhyātma*, *karma*, *adhibhūta*, *adhidaiva*, and *adhiyajña* (i.e. the complete nature of God consisting of *parā*, and *aparā-prakṛti*). He remembers God at the time of death also.]

With a desire to understand the above new terms, *Arjuna* asks seven questions to *Kṛṣṇa*. The eighth chapter begins with these questions — the first six dealing with the six terms beginning with *Brahman* and the last one dealing with the thought of a person at the time of death (1,2).

Lord *Kṛṣṇa* answers — *Brahman* is the imperishable Truth, *adhyātma* (or *ātman*) is the same *Brahman* behind the individual equipments. *Karma* refers to all actions which are the cause for the birth of all beings (3).

Adhibhūta is this entire perishable, inert universe. *Adhidaiva* is *Hiraṇyagarbha* who blesses all the organs of all beings. *Adhiyajña* is the Lord as the presiding deity of all the actions of the individual (4).

From the 5th verse till the end of this chapter, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* elaborately answers the last question i.e. how to remember the Lord even at the time of death.

Whatever be the predominant thought-pattern at the time of death, that determines the place of rebirth as well as the type of rebirth (6). Hence, if a person yearns for the Lord at the time of death, his rebirth will be conducive for the pursuit of the Lord in which he will naturally be successful (5). [It is said that those who are *saguṇa-upāsakas* will go to *Brahmaloka*. They will attain

liberation by gaining knowledge from *Brahmā*, the creator himself. This is called *krama-mukti*.] But the thought-pattern at the time of death is determined by the predominant thought-pattern throughout one's life. Hence, *Kṛṣṇa* asks us to remember God all the time so that we will remember Him at the time of death also (7). Though it may appear difficult, one can succeed in this by constant and sincere practice (8).

From the 9th to the 13th verse *Kṛṣṇa* describes elaborately the practice of *upāsana* at the time of death. One should first control all the organs of perception as well as action. Then by the skill of *yoga*-practice *prāṇa* has to be withdrawn (through the *suṣumnā-nāḍī*) to the top of the head between the eyebrows. Then, he should withdraw the mind back to the heart, its source. With such a mind he should meditate on *omkāra* or any chosen deity with all devotion. He attains God who is omniscient, eternal, the ruler, subtler than the subtlest, the sustainer of all, incomprehensible, effulgent, and beyond ignorance. All scriptures talk about Him alone. All dispassionate seekers reach Him alone. All disciplines are for attaining Him alone. He is the ultimate goal of *upāsakas*.

For a person who is sincerely committed to the practice of meditation of God and whose devotion is undivided, God is easily attainable (14).

Then the Lord compares the two types of goals i.e. God and the world. Nobody can put an end to the cycle of births by reaching higher *lokas* (worlds) or by acquiring better bodies. Even *Brahmā*, the creator, who has the longest duration of life (his day being our two thousand *catur-yugas*) cannot be free from finitude. Then what to talk of all other things and beings which appear during the day of *Brahmā* and disappear during his night? Hence all the *lokas* and achievements therein are finite. God is the only eternal and changeless principle who is beyond the unmanifest and manifest creation. He is imperishable and is the supreme goal of life. All beings exist in Him and everything is pervaded by Him. Attaining

SUMMARY

Him, one does not take rebirth in the mortal world (*saṁsāra*) (15 to 22).

Thus the Lord established that attainment of God is the highest goal compared to all other achievements. Now *Kṛṣṇa* discusses the two paths that lead to the two goals which are subject to non-return and return. An *upāsaka* attains *krama-mukti* by departing through the bright-path (*śukla-gati*) which is presided over by the deities of fire, day, bright-fortnight, and *uttarāyaṇam*. (He goes to *Brahmaloka*, gains Self-knowledge from *Brahmā* and becomes liberated.) Ritualists go by the dark-path (*kṛṣṇa-gati*) which is presided over by the deities of smoke, night, dark-fortnight, and *dakṣiṇāyaṇam*. They come back after enjoying in the heavens (23 to 26).

Since the bright path takes one to God, one should choose that alone. To take to that path one should become an *upāsaka*. Hence *Kṛṣṇa* advises *Arjuna* to be committed to *upāsana* (27).

Concluding the topic, *Kṛṣṇa* glorifies the result of *upāsana* as superior to all other results gained through all other pursuits. Because, none of them can take one to that goal which the *upāsaka* attains — the supreme, primal God.

(*Upāsana* can take a seeker to *guru* and *śāstra*. Naturally *upāsaka* becomes *jñāni-bhakta*. He is liberated in this very life. He has no travel. This aspect (*jīvanmukti*) was talked in the seventh chapter and will be continued from the ninth chapter.

If *upāsana* does not take one to *guru* and *śāstra*, he continues to be self-ignorant. He is not liberated in this life. But he travels by the bright-path to *Brahmaloka*. Instructed by *Brahmā*, the creator himself, he becomes a *jñāni-bhakta* and is liberated. This is called *krama-mukti* which is discussed in the eighth chapter.

Thus *upāsana* is useful for *jīvanmukti* as well as *krama-mukti*.)

SUMMARY

The main topics discussed in this chapter are:

1. Definition of the terms *Brahman*, *adhyātma*, *karma*,
adhibhūta, *adhidaiva*, and *adhiyajña*.....1 to 4
2. The significance and the method of remembering the Lord
at the time of death.....5 to 14
3. Comparison between two types of goals —
God and world.....15 to 22
4. The bright and dark paths.....23 to 27
5. Glory of *upāsanā*.....28

Since *Kṛṣṇa* begins the teaching with *Akṣara-brahman* this chapter is called *Akṣara-brahma-yoga*.
